

JOHNNY HOWARD AND ME

by

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For Father's Day 2010, my daughter (and family) gave me a tee-shirt and printed across the front is –

**I AM NOT
NOR HAVE I EVER BEEN
JOHN HOWARD
NEVER, EVER**

I have been mistaken for John Howard on a number of occasions and have even been abused in a Sydney street (while visiting Quicken)!

Visited the Quicken offices a few years back (1998) 'cos my son was working in Sydney for a few years. Daryl lived at North Strathfield and I caught the train to Stanmore(?) and walked up through the suburbs to the Quicken offices. On this walk, a little old lady on a walking stick greeted me with a big smile and a friendly greeting - "What a friendly lot these Sydneysiders are." Spent a number of hours at the Quicken offices meeting a large number of staff (most just not there any more). On my return walk this tall, lean, blonde guy started to abuse the hell out of me with things like, "You think you're smart, don't you?" Me, thinking I might have walked in front of him at the pedestrian crossing, apologised with, "Sorry?" He continued with things like, "We know what you're up to," and "You can't fool us," and so on and so on. He continued to walk with me down the street and continue the tirade at full volume! "You think you're smart don't you" and similar sort of stuff until we reached the next intersection and he veered off to cross the road bellowing the parting remark, "You think you're smart sitting up in Parliament in your suit but we know what you're up to!" The penny dropped - how thick can one get! (Age hasn't improved things either)!

Also a few (not too long ago) years, Freda and I went to Madame Tussard's wax works on Southbank (Melbourne); a temporary exhibition. John Howard was in the display but in a suit and I was in summer clothes. Anyway we waited until nobody was in that particular area and I gave Freda the camera and I stood alongside Johnny. I tried to keep my face in the same relaxed look but we took too long about it. At the instant Freda triggered the camera, two girls turned the corner and one said rather loudly, "Oh look; they could be brothers!" I smirked and looked nothing like John and the opportunity was lost.

When we lived in Bendigo I was full-time stamp dealing before we took on the bookshop. After selling the bookshop to LaTrobe University Book Shop as a going concern and moving to Melbourne, I used to go to a lot of Philatelic clubs mainly to dispose of the stock of stamps - LaTrobe did not take that stock. At one Stamp Club a particular lady used to greet my arrival with, "Hello Johnny!" Most could not see the joke.

During my first stint at the Royal Society of Victoria, I was seconded to stay back and close the hall after an evening meeting. I was about to duck out for something to eat before the meeting and one of the attendees (unknown to me)

arrived and wanted to leave his bag in the office. He decided to come with me; we had a bite to eat and were walking back up Exhibition Street. Just as we got to Rockman's (now Marriott) Hotel a limousine pulled in and these guys piled out and flanked the main doorway. As one passed me he looked hard at me and then looked away and back again. We continued on our way and looked back to see John Howard alight from the limousine. This "clown" with me started yelling and waving, "Hello Johnny!" John returned a hesitant wave but was not looking at him but looking intently at me!

30.11.2004 - Savage Club - A member of the Royal Society of Victoria who was also a member of the prestigious Savage Club, invited me along as a John Howard look alike. I arrived early, dressed in my son's tuxedo and was secreted in one of the rooms at the club where my eyebrows were darkened even further. After everyone was seated, I was guided in, unannounced, and seated at the President's table. I heard somebody say as I passed through, "Prime Minister," and it was pretty funny watching people taking furtive glances trying to figure out whether it really was John Howard!

At the Melbourne A.T. Conference 2001 I saw two ladies at morning tea talking to each other. One said something to the other who then turned around and looked at me. I walked across and said, "It happens all the time!" They were a bit stunned and asked how I knew what they were talking about. (Duh!). Unfortunately, I cannot remember who they were.

Once while walking along a main street in Richmond (Melbourne), an old guy (older than me, that is!) on a walking stick greeted me with a big smile and hello. I returned the greeting but it took another few steps before I realised that it had happened again!

On a bus trip in New Zealand a few ladies encouraged the joke by having their photos taken with me and kidding the New Zealanders as to who I really was (supposedly)!

Have seen people take second looks from time to time

Need I go on? Sure, many cannot see it but it might be fun creating the illusion?

Of course, John is now a FORMER Prime Minister but that wouldn't matter all that much.